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## Kenekuk: the Kickapoo Prophet

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## Book Notices

*Kenekuk: The Kickapoo Prophet*, by Joseph B. Herring. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988. xii, 176 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$19.95 cloth.

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As land pressures forced many Indian peoples from their traditional lands, there emerged within several tribes leaders who advocated a return to traditional values as a talisman to bring back better times. The resultant "red revitalization" movements brought a sense of dignity in the face of change to their followers and the later attention of biographers to the leaders. Joseph B. Herring's *Kenekuk: The Kickapoo Prophet* brings to the spotlight yet another of these often charismatic, often enigmatic headmen.

While certainly not as well known as Wovoka, Tenskwatawa, or Handsome Lake, Kenekuk, as Herring portrays him, was a man with a similar mission. From an early life of drunkenness and poverty of spirit, Kenekuk rose to prominence within his tribe because of his vision of himself and his people's place within the cosmos. Blending Christianity with native beliefs, he taught that God was angry with the Kickapoos for turning away from their traditions, and that God had sent him to deliver them from their sins.

Most whites of the time found it difficult to understand how one could blend Christian and native beliefs without sacrificing the tenets of either, but Kenekuk's Christian leanings probably helped him win support from white officials in Illinois. Repeatedly from 1819 to 1832 Kenekuk preached cooperation with the government's removal policy while, at the same time, he firmly resisted all efforts to move his people. Only after some Kickapoos associated with Black Hawk did increased white cries for removal force the Kickapoos into Kansas in 1833. Nevertheless, Kenekuk triumphed. His delaying tactics gave the Kickapoos the precious time they needed to adjust to white society — an opportunity denied to so many other tribes.

Overall, *Kenekuk: The Kickapoo Prophet* is a well-written short work which brings into focus a significant chapter in Kickapoo history and adds to our knowledge of this type of leadership within Indian societies.

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